The Little Family in Bethany.

BY CLARA FLORA.

There was a little family,
  Who lived in Bethany:
Two sisters and a brother,
  Composed this family.

With prayer and with singing,
  Like angels in the sky,
At morning and at evening
  They raised their voices high.

Though poor, and without money,
  Their kindred made amends;
Their house was ever open,
  To Jesus and his friends.

But while they lived so happy:
  So poor, so kind, so good,
Their brother was afflicted,
  And rudely thrown abed:

Poor Martha and her sister,
  Now wept aloud and cried:
But still he grew no better,
  But lingered on and died.

Now Jesus heard the tidings,
  Far in a distant land;
And swiftly did He travel
  To join that lonely band.

When Martha saw Him coming,
  She met Him on the way:
She told Him how her brother
  Had died and passed away;

He cheered her and he blest her,
  And told her not to weep;
For in Him was the power
  To wake him from his sleep.

When Mary saw him coming,
  She ran and met him too,
And at His feet a weeping
  Rehearsed the tale of woe;

When Jesus saw her weeping,
  He fell to weeping too,
And wept until they showed Him
  Where Lazarath was entombed.

The Jews came for to comfort them,
  And drive away their gloom—
He looked unto His father,
  His Loving friend to save.

Lazareth came from that gloomy mound;
  And in full strength and vigor
He rose to life again,
And walked upon the ground.

So if we love the Jesus,
  And do His holy will,
From death He will redeem us,
  And take us to the skies,
And bid us live forever
  Where pleasure never dies.

Christian Evolution.

BY E. MASON.

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of himself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Mark, 4: 28.

The kingdom of God is a growth, an evolution The tree is first a seed, then a blade, then a tiny stalk, then a bush with leaves and blossoms, before it can become a fruit-bearer. This is a general law that we experience everywhere around us. The man is first a babe, then a boy, then a youth with all the immaturity and unripeness of inexperience, before he comes to manly vigor and manly achievements. So, again, the state is first a family, then a tribe, then a nation, finally a congeries of nations. Also the church is first a pillar of stones set up by the way of memorial, then a tent, then a temple serving the whole people, and then becoming a shrine to which they journey from far-off lands, then a multitude of churches with a roof for every one in his own village; yet with all the difference that exist, to become a union of churches, with its motto, *E pluribus Unum* ('one composed of many') all these are growths. In all this then is evolution, transformation from little to great, from the seemingly useless to the worthy, from the little tender sapling to the fruit-bearing tree.

We will still follow up the illustration given us by the Lord, and there-upon learn an important lesson. The seed in growing, mysteriously appropriates the nourishment given by the soil, so that it receives strength and develops into stalk, branches and leaves. This same law is plainly to be seen in every realm where there is life. As the plant receives food and is nourished there-by and grows, so it is in the animal kingdom. The animal, from man downwards, partakes food, and is nourished, receives strength, and develops into limbs, body and head. But for what does the plant and animal grow? Surely the Creator must have had some design in view in putting this law of life and development into operation. The end has not yet been reached when the stalk, branches, and leaves have appeared, or it would be entirely useless so far as we could see. Neither in the case of man nor animal do we consider that the mere development of limbs and body is the object of existence. Then let us investigate.

But let us stop long enough to inquire whether we are justified in taking these illustrations of nature to learn something of the spiritual? When we consider the Lord's many appeals to the incidents of natural life, with which all were so familiar, to teach spiritual facts and the principles of eternity, how can we doubt? Notice how he likens conversion to a new birth. Also in another place he tells us we must become as little children—that is we must have the disposition of children, in their innocence, dependence and confidence and readiness to forgive and forget. Every miracle he wrought, or at least those that are recorded, are intended to teach us spiritual lessons. Then such assertions as, 'So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast his seed into the ground;' place the matter beyond all doubt. The same God, therefore the same law, seems to be at work in every realm of God's universe.

Then, the question, for what does the plant and the animal grow? is a very pertinent one. Surely the plant does not grow merely to develop into stalk, branches, and leaves? It does not require a very learned man to answer this. Neither does the animal grow merely that his limbs and body may be developed. The Lord so created the plant, that the roots may take in certain ingredients of the soil, that it may be nourished, and eventually grow and develop. So does the animal partake of his food, which strengthens and develops it. Then again, the question presents itself. For what purpose? The stalk, branches and leaves are not the end of its growth, the great object of all this provision is to strengthen and prepare it, so that it can yield fruit. Thus it is with the animal, it partakes of food, gathers strength and grows until it can provide for itself and thus answer the end of its creation. With man it is the same; he eats, grows and matures until he is able to grapple with the stern duties of life. The object of development in the plant is fruit, and in the animal labor. The young sapling just verging into life cannot be expected to yield fruit, it needs to develop. to maturity. So also we cannot expect man in his infantile or youthful existence to battle with life, in tilling the soil and grappling with the realities that form the major part of our experience.

We can very profitably apply this law to the soul. just as a plant and the animal need food for their growth and development, so does the soul. The same God who nourishes the tender sappling and the little babe, provides the inner man with soul-food. The means of grace instituted by the Lord himself is the food which develops the principles that must form the foundation of a Christian life. As the stalk must grow strong enough to bear fruit, and the limbs and body of man powerful enough to perform labor, so must these principles develop that they may yield spiritual fruit.

Faith, hope and love are the great principles of Christianity. Science and experience has taught the agriculturist much in the cultivation of certain crops. In England it is a common practice for farmers to send a sample of soil to an analyst, telling him the kind of grain he intends to raise in that field; and the Chemist after proper examination will tell the farmer what ingredient the soil needs so as to make the crop a success. This is the result of years of close study and constant investigation. We are aware, too, what strides science has made in enlightening our minds as to the nutritious qualities of certain kinds of diet. Many thing that was once commonly used as food; through the changes of custom and taste, was allowed to pass into disuse, but both science and experience have taught us of their value as a part of the food of man.

But we must return to the principles of Christianity—faith, hope and charity. These in their relation to the object of man's life, correspond with the relation the stalk, branches and leaves of the, plant bear to the fruit, and the limbs, body and head of the animal bear to the labor, it is intended they should perform. Then as we cannot expect the fruit bearer to yield unless the stalk and leaves have grown, nor the man to perform his daily toil unless his limbs, body and head are matured neither can we expect the Christian to perform the duties required of him, unless these principles are properly developed.

The law of nature with which we are all familiar will teach us how to develop these principles, that the end of our creation may be realized. We say this because Jesus used nature as a large blackboard, and commonplace and well understood realities were the pictures he drew to illustrate heavenly truths. So according to the teaching of Christ, the first thing the soul needs is food. And it must be heaven-provided food. Artificial and patent substitutes will not answer the purpose. But the same Lord that provides nourishment for the modest, humble on the roadside, so that it may smile upon the world even from its obscurity, has provided nourishment for the soul of man. The means of grace or the ordained forms of worship is the Lord's food essential for the development of spiritual principles.

Just as experience and knowledge has enlightened man as to the food which suits his need and constitution best, so we may use our common sense and experience in using the food so abundantly provided to suit the needs, and not merely the wants of the soul. We must keep in view that faith, hope and charity are the principles upon which spiritual existence depend. So let us see what is the soul-food that the Lord has provided for their development. I may stop here a moment to assert that I do not think there is a Christian man in the world that would question the prominence of this trinity of graces. No man can exist spiritually without faith. There on the last evening of the Lord's existence, we find him instituting the communion. Taking the bread and wine he consecrates them as emblems, of his own body and blood. When in obedience to his command, 'Do this in remembrance of me,' we partake of these emblems, we are very substantially reminded of the blessing of his life and death brought to the human family. When the Christian in the sincerity of his heart thus feeds on the Lord's promise our faith must be strengthened.

Then, hope is another of the principles without which we cannot live as Christians. There may be no principle that needs greater attention than this. We are so apt to be discouraged. So many are our afflictions, and trials, and disappointments, that when the dark shadows fall across our pathway, we are liable to give way and nestle down in despair. But here on the evening of his betrayal, while surrounded by his faithful few at his 'last supper,' Jesus points us to the grand marriage supper of the Lamb. 'I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' We are looking forward to that fulfillment in eternity when the feast of everlasting happiness will be, spread, and we shall take our place with our Lord, The Lord's supper is an emblem of that heavenly feast. Each time we partake of it, we span the chasm of intervening time and in imagination are seated with our loved ones as the guests of Jehovah. Thus by the exercise of the imagination, and the reaching out of the mind, hope is revived, and the heart is flooded with joy.

Love is the greatest and most essential of all the graces that decorate the soul. This, too must be fed and revived. Every rite and ordinance in the church does something toward cultivating this principle. Every prayer we utter, every service we attend, every gift we bestow, every sermon we hear, every song we sing, every communion we observe has a tendency to strengthen our love to God especially if we are in earnest and honest in the use of these means of grace. It is true that the partaking of the cup and loaf will help us to realize more fully the great sacrifice Jesus made for us, and thus renew our faith. But it is impossible for us to contemplate this greatest of all expressions of God's love for us, without having our love for him intensified. Neither again is it possible to partake of the Lord's supper, and bask in the bright future of anticipation without being drawn toward